PyroTechnics

THE NOW & THEN NEWSLETTER OF
GENERAL TECHNICS

PERPETRATED LARGELY BY
JEFF DUNTEMANN
& CAROL DUNTEMANN

GENERAL
TECHNICS

NO. 17 OCTOBER 1978

NEVER SAY DIE, ETC.

Before I get into my sermon for today, let me scream a little for the shellacking I'm getting over last issue's editorial. OWOWOWOWOWOW! So lay off, already. You got me all wrong. (It doesn't always pay to be subtle.) Sun Power (note caps) is a popular nut cult that thinks you can run a vacuum cleaner, twenty light bulbs, and an electric range off one solar cell. They hate nuclear power because nuclear power is the In thing to hate. They don't know shit from shinola about science or technology. They're just good haters, *verrrrry* stylish, and very loud.

Solar energy, on the other hand, is an energy source, nothing more. It is not a terribly practical energy source, but it should be looked into, especially in the Southwest. It sure as hell is no substitute for nuclear energy, coal, or fusion. Unless it's in space, but that's a whole other can of worms. Read the words and do your best to see what sits between the lines.

Now--let's talk about Wayne Green. Green is the editor/publisher of two magazines, *73* (for amateur radio) and *Kilobaud* (microcomputers.) These are the two finest techie mags in the world, and if you don't subscribe to one, fer chrissake subscribe to the other. You'll read things in those magazines that you just won't read elsewhere, for the simple reason that Green is not afraid to antagonize anybody.

Wayne has been in publishing for quite awhile. He edited *CQ* magazine when there was still a CQ magazine, then founded *73*. He drove Jim Fisk, assistant editor of *73* into such paroxysms of rage that the poor man went out and founded his own magazine, *Ham Radio*. Quite a fit of pique, as they say. He founded *Byte* magazine, and then had it pulled out from under him under circumstances so mysterious that no one seems to know the particulars. Green claims he can't say in print because he'd be sued for libel. Someday maybe we'll know.

Green's favorite pastime is baiting the American Radio Relay League, the stuffy gerontocracy which publishes *QST* and generally speaks for amateur radio. I've often thought him rude and sometimes even mean with regard to the ARRL, but he's got such a damnable habit of being *right*. He feels the pulse of amateur radio and techiedom in general better than anyone else I know of. He predicted the microcomputer explosion, back when the Altair 8800 was all there was. He predicted that incentive licensing would bring ham radio's population growth to a halt. That and a lot of other things. When Green speaks, I listen.

The last issue of *73* contained an editorial which depressed me profoundly. Though he tried to put an edge of optimism into it, what he did in effect was predict the end of ham radio at the hands of the Third World. How? Next year, delegates from around the world will meet at the World Administrative Radio Conference (WARC) and re-allocate radio spectrum usage. The US and other Western nations have only one vote. The same as New Outer Moronia, population seventeen. And there are a lot of New Outer Moronias in the world today. They have made it plain that they are going to get the lion's share of the radio spectrum for their use.

For what? Shortwave broadcasting, mainly. Read here: propaganda. Nobody listens to it. But they self-righteouosly proclaim an absolute right to "tell their own story" to a world which is trying to stamp them out, among other paranoid fantasies. They are going to grab all the frequency space they can, ham radio's and others. But the ripple effect will be awful: all the services which lose frequencies to the Moronians will be after our frequencies with an axe. We could lose everything. We could end up with a bare sliver of airspace here and there, which would be the same thing.

What can we do? About the Moronians, nothing. It's too late, and I consider the Third World politically insane, anyway. Check out Libya, Uganda, Cambodia, Viet Nam, etc. You get the idea. H-bombing would be too good for most of them. There's no reasoning with them. About all we can do is write our congressmen and demand that the US pull out of WARC. That won't work, but we can try.

If ham radio ends up without frequencies, what then? I wouldn't feel the least bit disturbed by the thought of operating on the sneak, as virtually everybody does on CB, unlicensed and unidentified. Most hams are too gentlemanly to do that, however. It would be the end of it.

At least that's what Wayne Green says. If it were anyone else I'd call it pessimistic bullshit. Coming from Green, it scares the hell out of me. I sure hope to God he's wrong. Trouble is, he usually isn't.

* * *

HUNTING THE WILD GREENBACK

I hate to have to do this, but...we need money. One quick eyescan down the Mob will show you what I mean. Membership is booming. In order to get everybody a Pyro and still have back issues for future members, I have to run lots of them. That, combined with the fact that they guard the paper supply as though it were Fort Knox around here, makes it necessary for me to bring my own supplies. Therefore, let us found the PyroTechnics Paper Fund. I'll throw in a ten-spot to give it a head start. We'll add the 24 bucks collected at Windycon for the techie party we never had. The rest of it will work like this: New members must contribute at least one US dollar to the paper fund in addition to sending stamps. Old members--well, I shouldn't lean too hard on you to pay a fee that didn't exist when you joined, but...be a sport. Minimum contribution is one dollar. You two or three prosperous members, let your consciences be your guide. I won't say that I'll refund the stamps of non-contributors, but let's say you'll slip a few points in our regard. Do what you can to keep a good thing going.

* * *

GENERAL TECHNICS is an organization of fannish techies (and not techish fannies, as some wiseass reported) who share data, resources, and experience in pursuit of a good time and occasional profit. The group meets mainly at cons, hamfests, and private Berserker Weekends

MEMBERSHIP is terribly difficult to obtain. you must somehow scrape up a number of 15¢ stamps, and then at great effort write a letter explaining what your qualifications as a techie are to

Jeff Duntemann
6208 North Campbell Avenue
Chicago IL 60659

including those stamps. If the abovementioned person can read your handwriting you are an

APPRENTICE TECHIE and entitled to call yourself a member of General Technics. You will also receive

PYROTECHNICS until your stamps run out. Renewal of membership is synonymous with sending more stamps. If you decide to quit, we will use one of your stamps to send the rest back to you. If you're nuts enough to want to become a

SECRET MASTER UV TECHNOLOGY (SMUT) you had better write to

Tullio Proni
530 West Walnut
Kalamazoo MI 49007

because I don't have anything to do with it.

ANYTHING ELSE, ask me. I may not know but I guess better than anybody else around here.

GIGO

FROM LEININGER: ...The other day I ran across an interesting thing. It seems that Part 15 of the FCC regs sets aside the frequencies between 160 and 190 khz for unlicensed radio communication. That's 1875 meters, and I don't know whether it's good for anything, but Popular Electronics ran a two part article on it, including a transmitter and receiver for it back in Jan.-Feb. 1972. It might be worth loking into. They use tubes, though.

(So? There were no transistors during WW II, and we won that. Contrary to current opinion, tubes and Black Plague are not the same thing. 1875 is a governmental oddity that should be used more often. There are restrictions, mainly that ouput power must be less than one watt and the antenna system must be shorter than fifty feet. Ground wave is king at those frequencies, which means that an excellent ground system is imperative. So it's no good for techie talkies. Also, during the summer, every damned thunderstorm in the western hemisphere sets up a howling on the low frequencies. Still, I'd suggest that two techies a couple of miles apart should build and set up such a system, just for the hell of it. That's why it's there. G'wan, do it!)

FROM MAHAFFEY: I am writing you this note to tell you about a problem I am having with T-K Graphics. Last year in August I sent in an order for $43.50 and in December I sent in an order for $53.72 worth of books. To date I have received $12.50 worth of books. I have repeatedly sent inquiries to T-K Graphics about my books to no avail. Finally I requested my money back and then demanded my money back. For all my efforts I have received nothing but the pain of knowing I have been ripped off. T-K Graphics has had $84.72 for almost a year now and refuse to return it. I have ample proof that they owe it but apparently could care less. At first they claimed that the books were not published yet, and then they claimed they could not get the books (books were out of stock), and then they asked me to be patient because they were having problems. (Nothing specific, just "severe difficulties.") This explains why I have waited a year to get some action. I have written to the Post Office to file a complaint. I have also written to a number of fanzines and now plan to write to the BBB and the Attorney General.

(Give 'em hell, Mike. And everybody else, put T-K Graphics on your "Poison" list. SOB's like that seem to latch onto any popular field in its ascendancy. We've seen a number of marginal computer manufacturers take orders for products that have not yet been built, as a way of procuring working capital. Bad, bad idea. Let's drive them into the sea.)

FROM HESS: ...While the techie room was a good idea, one prime ingredient was lacking--organization. I admit to being part of the problem in that I let the questionnaire you sent out sit around the house and never did return it even after I filled it in; I selfishly assumed that the older members of the group would have things under control when I walked in. (This is known as naivete.) The next time we go public, a coordinator should be found to organize exhibits and room sitting, and to take ultimate responsibility for security. I lost a VOM and assorted hand tools to the spoilers at Iggy. (And let me thank you again for moving the rest of the mass to your room for protection.) I do not volunteer for the coordinator's joys and sorrows because Chicago is a GT hotbed and your address is a natural center for communications. One of the techies in the area would be best suited for the job. Also: I have in my posession a pair of amber-tinted glasses and a Radio Shack 17.4V nicad charger mistakenly mixed in with my things when you cleaned out the techie room. If these belong to somebody, please let me know so I can ship them back.

(The reason the techie room failed was simply one of security, plus some bumbling on our part and the concom's part. There was no security to it; hotel people could wander in and out at will, and for some reason the hotel seemed willing to open the room when no one was there to roomsit but was unwilling to give us a set of keys. That stinks. I lost my paper tape reader and a digital voltmeter module, and yes, it rankles. Then again, it was an experiment, and if we ever do it again it will be done a lot differently. By the way, if anybody has Jim's or my stuff, ship it back. There are enough vultures out there ready to prey on us, without us preying on each other. But I strongly suspect that the VOM, DVM, and tape reader have permanently passed out of GT's ken.)

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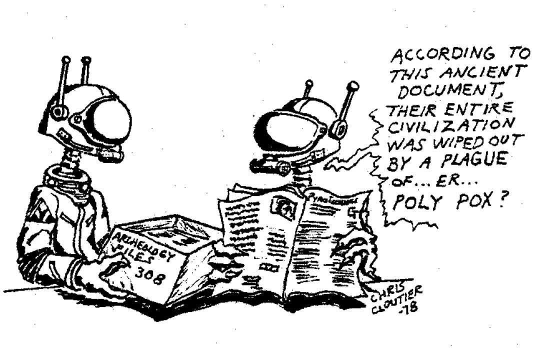

ACCORDING TO THIS ANCIENT DOCUMENT, THEIR ENTIRE CIVILIZATION WAS WIPED OUT BY A PLAGUE OF... ER... POLY POX?
ARCHEOLOGY FILES 368
Pyrotechnics
CHRIS CLOUTIER '78

GT AT IGUANACON

The moment I stepped off the plane I knew I was in trouble. I'd worn a three-piece suit. And this was Phoenix in August. Arrgh.

And we were about the last to arrive. Before we left we had run into Bill Higgins, Barry Gehm, Renee Sieber, Tullio Proni, Steve Johnson, Mike Sestak, Jim Hess, Jim Ransom, George Ewing, Gordon Garb, Bill Leininger, Mike Blake, Nikki Ballard, Dave Anderson, Alice and Angel Insley, Bill and Michelle Colsher, Gretchen and Doug Van Dorn, Mike Mahaffey, Bob Osband, Bob Halloran, Chip Morningstar, Sarah Prince, Greg Tomensky, Frank Stodolka, John Stanley, Martha Soukup, Mark Evans, and Marco Mendez. Easily the largest GT crowd ever gathered in one place at one time. Well done.

As for the Techie Room? Not so well done. Partly our fault, mostly the ConCom's fault. They promised us a nice room in the Hyatt, forgetting that they had also promised that same room for themselves. So we got unceremoniously moved to the basement of the Adams. It was such a secure room that they wouldn't even give us keys--and yet the hotel staff used it as a shortcut through to the kitchen. And on Friday a pipe burst in the ceiling and the tiles turned to oatmeal. Bad omen. We cleared out permanently on Saturday, and the Techie Room floated about the con like a lost soul. Sorry, people. I did the best I could.

How organized can a basically disorderly organization like GT be at a gathering of collective chaos such as is a Worldcon? We did all right. We had several GT pool parties at the little Heated Puddle on the sunbathing deck. During this time I snapped swimsuit pictures of all female GT members who could be cajoled into it for a possible future "Pyro Cuties" feature. Any female member who wasn't there and yet wants to be in on it, send such a picture here. Bill Colsher was advocating a PornoTechnics feature, but the girls kept their suits on.

Cosmo Klein and Elsie Twosie attended, Elsie clicking away and Cosmo resplendent in his new face and can-crusher arm. The two of them chased around the Atrium Friday afternoon, menacing Filthy Pierre and doing the Hardware Store Polka in front of local TV news cameras, which later reported the event with much smug mundane snickering on the 9 PM news. To hell with them. The con loved our robots.

The first GT party took place in Bill Higgins's room beside the pool. Some girl in a wet T-shirt and bikini bottoms was flitting around hotly pursued by Cosmo, his grin lighting up the dark for miles around. The skinnydippers invariably hide in the potted plants until I go to bed before doing their thing; I was not able to get in on it. George Ewing and I did take Cosmo into the SFWA suite to meet Jack Williamson; sadly, by that time Cosmo's finger motor was stripped out, and he could not longer crush beer cans. Wait until Windycon...

The Masquerade was marvelous. I saw it from the inside, having been encased in a shirt of mirror-bright gold-mylar sequins by my industrious sister, emulating one of the four main characters of Williamson's Golden Blood. Carol and Gretchen were dressed in a few milligrams of chiffon fluff, and Doug wore fire-engine red satin robes and brandished Didi Ellingsen's bullwhip. We got a close look at the other costumes, at least...like the seven-months pregnant woman dressed in a few daisies and a smile. There were so many other terrific costumes that we didn't even get a second run through. Sigh. Later that evening Tullio had a good time shining his laser rifle off of me. Some people are easily amused.

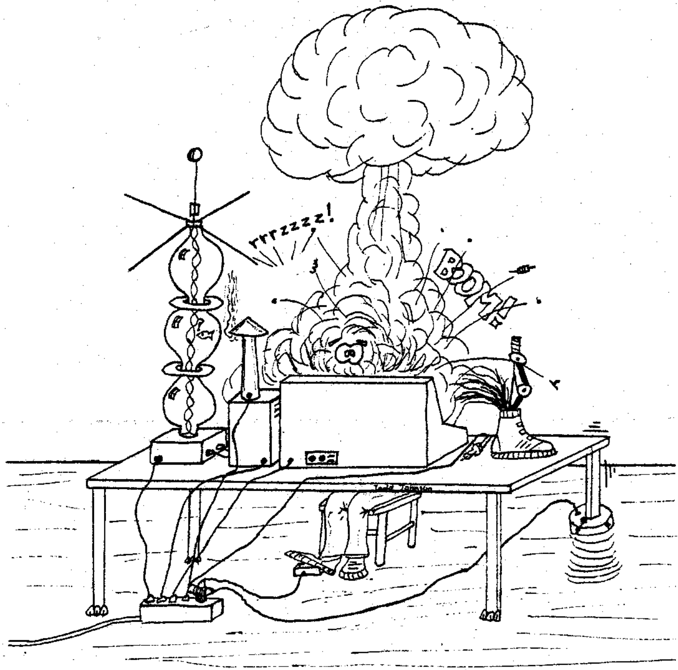
Earlier that day, an SF rock show or something strange like that took place in the Convention Center, and the folks involved ordered about three or four hundred pounds of dry ice for special effects. Even in the blistering Arizona heat, the erstwhile CO2 kept its cool so well that after the show, some eighty to a hundred pounds of the stuff was pitched into a garbage can behind the theater. Weeeeeeeellllllll, far be it from us to let that sort of thing happen.... hence the first GT Dry Ice Capades, with Bill Higgins standing in the midst of a bubbling, frothing ornamental fountain, playing his ukelele and freezing his can off.

Sunday about noon we gathered at the Phoenix room to prepare for a presentation on building robots. We opened the door to find eighteen chairs in a room seating five hundred. The concom had stolen the rest for the Harlan Ellison Roast. Could we have our chairs back? No. Why? "You aren't expecting that many people, are you?" Concom be damned; we sat on the floor. The program went well, with Cosmo and Elsie exposing their innards for an interested and cooperative audience. Everybody cheered when I asked people not to smoke. I appreciated that more than anyone knows. In the middle of things, Bill Higgins turned loose a windup robot chain gang which took about five steps and fell over. So much for alternative energy sources. Chairs notwithstanding, we considered the robot show a resounding success. We even had enough Chaotic Manual of Robot Assembly's to go around.

We tried to have a techie room in my suite later that day, but the heat of too many bodies in too little volume got near unbearable. The indoor antenna we set up for ham radio purposes was of little use, and no contacts were made. We did see and discuss the Game of Life as demonstrated on Gordon Garb's Digital Group system, and meet some interesting people from around the country.

Tullio sold enough rayguns to supply the Fifth Army. In mid-con the FBI swooped down on the huckster room, confiscating unofficial Star Wars material of all descriptions. Tullio hurriedly kicked a couple of light sabers under the table and was not affected. As the con wound down, ice got to be very scarce, and scurrilous Ice Patrols snuck down halls, wastebaskets in hand, trying hard to look inconspicuous and/or innocent, and failing.

On the last night, we spotted a pair of Princess Leias having a sandwich down in the coffee shop, and serenaded them with a John Williams impersonation on several kazoos. More than anything else, that symbolized the spirit of General Technics at Iguanacon. We proved ourselves to be second to none in our ability to build gadgets, make music, be silly, and raise highly original cain. See you all next year, or failing that, in '80.


rrrzzzz!
BOOM!

"I think we dropped a negative sign, Al"

ZAPS FROM THE BACKWOODS

DE GEORGE EWING

Battlestar Galactica Revisited, or, It Makes a Little More Sense the Second Time Around!

This author was one of the few techies fortunate enough to see the cinematic version of BSG released this past summer in Canada. Then followed a space of nearly six weeks waiting, including two weeks in the bush, various expeditions to Ann Arbor, Weirdowatching on the LA bus system, and the worldcon in a warmish town about a hundred miles south of Swollen Dog, Arizona. Rumors abounded: The audience evaluations were in the toilet. Lucas Skyfilmer was going to sue. ABC had finally realized that the "Socialator" was really, whorrors, a Geisha/prostitute, and the censors had written her out of the script. The dog robot had bitten John Dykstra in the ass, and he was suing Robert Kleiner for damages. BSG would never be shown Stateside, but would make millions in European reruns. Et Cetera.

The long-awaited day finally arrived, and your friendly media reviewer scarfed a couple of cannisters of Aussie lager, hunkered down in front of his trusty RCA EP40W, and started watching.

Finaglecarping first: Just as in WARZ, the science really sucks. Bad. There is no distinction made between the hard vacuum of outer space and the ocean breeze above a Navy aircraft carrier. Terms like "Galaxy" and "Turbolaser" are so brutally misused as to drive Harlan Ellison to go out and smash a dwarf's kneecaps. ("Commander Adama! The Cylons are only 30 microns away!" The closer they get, the more you need Lavoris--Ed.) Everything has big whining jet pods on it. And whenever anything crosses the screen, it goes BEEWAAWWWWW!

ITEM: In deep space, a fighter ship makes a "hot" carrier deck landing in the recovery pod, and the crash crew runs out and smothers the flames (!) with CO2 fire extinguishers. And the frigging airlock door is still wide open! Gaah!

Okay. I must admit, things have shaped up quite a bit in the TV version, although the Dykstra universe with its fleets of aircraft carriers still rankles.

ITEM: Nearly twenty minutes of additional establishing scenes have been added, which makes it a lot easier to follow the Laumerian politics and generally to figure out what the hell is going on. The movie version left out vital bits of data which established that: A. The Cylons were not chrome copies of the Darth Vader Singers and Dancers at the High School Latin Buffet, but robot berserkers left over from another dead race. B. ~~Ben Cartwright~~ er, Adama-12 was really behind the cooks-in-fighter-clothing masquerade on the casino planet. C. Athena has the hots for Starbuck. Etc.

ITEM: The Tektronix displays really aren't that bad. One wonders where the Zodiac people buy their 2N3055's, but it's better than Irwin Allen sparkpanels and STrek blinkenlights

ITEM: The Commander does not go down on the planet and fistfight with the Xylophones, or get captured four times every episode, and still take the entire ship's chain of command plus ship's doctor along with him.

ITEM: There are some interesting women characters, better looking than Princess O, and with more to do than stand around in a red velour cocktail dress with the heat sink from a 2C39 screwed into her ear canal. But can it really be that American Television is ready for the Larry Niven concept of a competant ship's whore? True, the torrid nude scene between Starbuck and Laurette Spang in the catapault tube was cut for "family TV" (God, that expression makes me barf!--Ed.) but heck, the concept would have been hopeless on TV ten years ago.

Retief fans, take heart. Blithering politicians and craven diplomats are in for a firstrate shellacking on this series, and the BSG is a fair realization of a CDT Peace Enforcer. To watch the Soft Ones blast their way through wave after wave of Groaci batplanes. To watch the bug-eyed Blugs Guul the hell out of the wicked S&G gamblers on the Casino Planet. To wait in expectation for all the Ancient Astronaut bullshit the not-too-subtle Egyptian shtick (catch those King Tut pilot helmets) is pointing towards. To wish the hell Glen Larsen had bought rights to Dominic Flandry and let Poul Anderson write the script and run the series. To realize with chagrin that there are twelve sequels to Star Wars coming.

To wonder if the fourth ship to the left in the ragtag fleet is really a Klingon government surplus battle cruiser with '59 Plymouth tailfins bolted on. To wonder what God thinks of Ben Cartwright's biblical soliloquies.

This same weekend, there was also a rerun of Starship Invasions, and King Kong. It's all a Canadian plot to get even with Ben Bova for that Starlost thing!!

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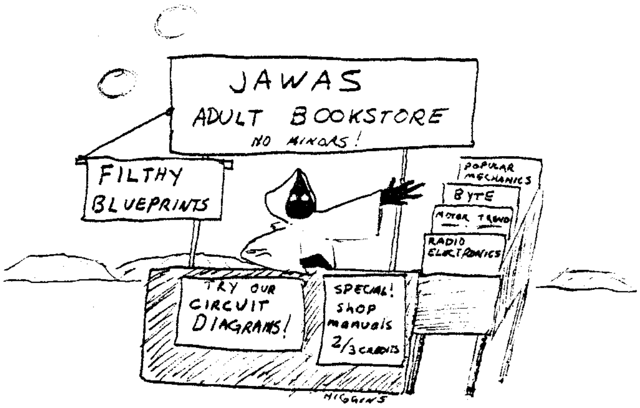


IT MAY OR MAY NOT COME IN THE MAIL

-THOUGHTS ON PARTS

Money Talks Dept. Bob Halloran reported a problem he had with Advanced Computer Products, formerly Advanced Microcomputer Products. He sent them an order for about fifteen bucks worth of odd parts, and they thoroughly screwed up the order and gave him plenty of lame excuses. Now, last week I got my COSMAC VIP computer exactly five days after they received my order. This after not waiting for my personal, non-certified check to clear. What does this mean? It means that Advanced will treat you like a king if you drop $250, and may or may not treat you at all for less than fifty. I'm going to give them another chance, because I've dealt with them (for small dollar amounts) several times with excellent service. But if this is the wave of the future, you might want to put them on your "Emergencies Only" dealer list. Has anybody else been screwed over by them?

Do not under any circumstances deal with T-K Graphics. (See GIGO for details.)

Both the COSMAC VIP and the KIM-1 have been drastically cut in price by some dealers. Others will soon follow suit, I'm sure, but before you buy...look around.

Other things besides electronic parts can be had through the mail. I've gotten two catalogs which ought to be a part of every tinkerer's file. Would you like to buy 000-120 thread screws, nuts, and taps? (Such screws are what God uses to hold atomic nuclei together, and for other small jobs.) Write to:

Elwick Supply Co.
230 Woods Lane
Somerdale NJ 08083

This same outfit also stocks brass screws and threaded brass rod, stainless steel hex bolts for things like antenna installations outdoors, odd size and shape washers, lockwashers, and lag bolts, miniature brass hinges and cabinet fittings, small woodworking tools, drills, and taps. Ask for a lot of this stuff at your local hardware store and they'll laugh at you or pretend they don't speak English.

Another outfit to get a catalog from is:

Brookstone
127 Vose Farm Rd.
Peterborough NH 03458

Their thing is precision and miniature tools. It's laid out rather like one of those rich-folk gift catalogs (Horchow Collection, etc.) and contains some of the damnedest things. Woodworking chisels, birch dowel pins, metal blackening solution, thread and rod guages, V-blocks, brad drivers, epoxy putty, carbide drill bits for drilling plate glass, micro-files, wind guages, brass hammers, dog doors, sextants, unpickable padlocks, hand vises, spring winders, in short, your compleat Yankee mechanic supply store. Prices are a touch high, but the stuff looks good. Couldn't hurt to have it on hand. You never know when you might need a few dozen birch dowel pins.

Another outfit to to consider is Alpha Electronics Laboratories, 2302 Oakland Gravel Road, Columbia MO 65201. Phone is (314)874-1545. We met them at a recent hamfest, and I was floored. They have the most incredible selection of IC's I have ever seen, including virtually every member of the COSMAC uP IC family. In stock. And cheap. I'm not certain that they have a catalog, but they do mail order, and suggest calling before 8 AM, when phone rates are still cheap. They will ship immediately on credit if you tell them your ham callsign. Prepaid orders get a 5% discount if you are a ham. (Ham licenses are still free. How many more reasons do you need to get one???) They have self-blinking LED's, \$1.00 for jumbo type, \$.75 for a slightly smaller but rectangular style. They were also doing a pretty brisk trade in those new TI sound effects chips. They had a system breadboarded, and I was impressed. I ordered a sound effects board using this chip from Bullet, and I'll review it next Pyro. Looks good.

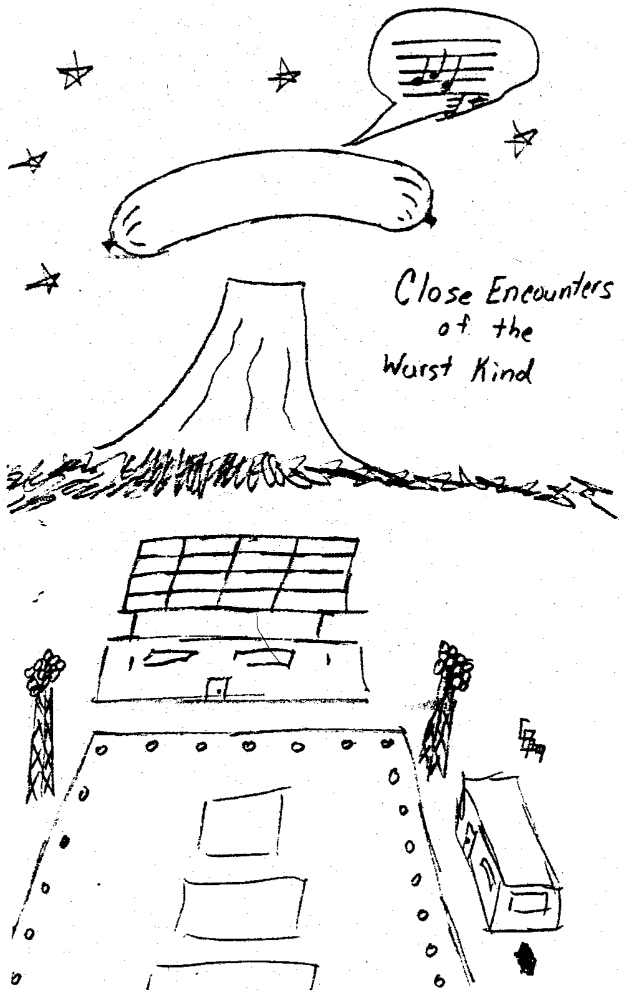
I have found out recently that Sharp Associates has gone out of business and is not answering calls or letters. Seems some of their Selectric interface kits have a bad habit of self-destructing. And I bought one. Sigh.

TECHNICS

BY AL DUESTER

OK, gang, for those of you who can't seem to get the hang of molding plexiglas for those Proni-type handles without ending up with something that looks like it was custom-made for a Puppeteer, salvation is at hand....well, sort of.

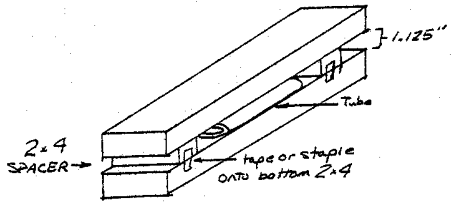
The way I do it is to get either PVC or ABS plastic pipe, depending on the color wanted for the handle. PVC is usually only found in white, off-white (sometimes known as Dirty--Ed.) or grey, unless you happen to have a plastics manufacturer next door. ABS comes in black, but it is far less common and much harder to find. Check your plumbers, and don't forget their scrap bins, which is where a good many handles may be found. Use Series 40, which has a fairly thick wall and is quite rigid. 1 1/2 inches is the best size if you have a normal human hand. Other sizes exist, if you don't.


Close Encounters of the Worst Kind

Once you've spent days finding the stuff (and don't forget to pick up some ABS cement while you're hunting) you still have to make it into a handle. Here's how:

1) Get two pieces of 2X4 about 14" long.

2) Make two spacers that are 1.125" thick. This size is good because 9v batteries fit snugly, and it feels good in the hand. Adjust the spacer size if you want a thinner or thicker handle. If you make it much thinner the handle warps in molding. Tape the spacers onto one 2X4. (see illo.)



3) Heat your oven up to 300-325 degrees F.

4) Cut a piece of tubing to length, making sure to leave excess to account for curvature in the body of the device you intend to put the handle on. Also leave extra if you want to angle the handle.

5) Stick it in the oven, on a flat cookie sheet, with paper towelling in between the metal and the plastic. Don't let the paper get too near the gas flame or heater element, or it will go WOOF! Also watch out for fumes. Some materials, when heated, give off traces of their plasticizer. Use a dowel or potholder and rotate the tube so it heats evenly.

6) When the tube is evenly heated and soft, take it out of the oven and put it between the spacers on the 2X4. Take the other 2X4, place it atop the tube, and press evenly. Put a weight atop the 2X4 and let it cool until it can be touched without discomfort. Better still, let it sit until cool.

ABS is normally a dull-finish plastic, especially after you get done sanding all the nicks and grooves out of it and rubbing the lettering off. A gloss finish may be had by getting ABS cement in aerosol cans. You spray the entire surface and let it dry. This takes some practice to do it right. Let the tube dry completely before touching it, or fingerprints will be etched into the plastic. Small drips and ridges will usually dry into invisibility.

The only problem with this method is making the bottom cover. About the only way is to rough-cut an ellipse a little larger than the handle bottom, and then file or sand it until it matches the handle all the way around. Then glue a smaller piece of plexiglas on the inside of the plate and sand for a force-fit inside the handle. Better still, sand for a loose fit, drill and tap for small machine screws. This is better, because your batteries won't tend to fall out in the midst of heated battle.

THE MOB

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SPECIAL LETTERS DEPT.

DEAR

(COSMO)

Ilike your name Ithink its cuted****

DONT YOU.

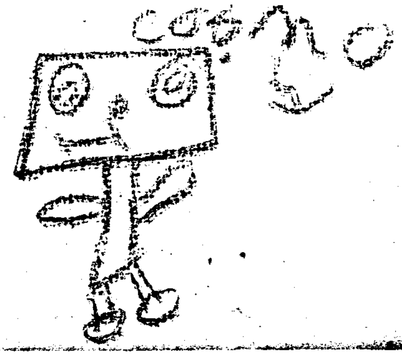
Iherd you have a brainI like them dont you.

Ithout so

well thats all for

LOVE

KELLY



COSMO Replies:

Dear Kelly:

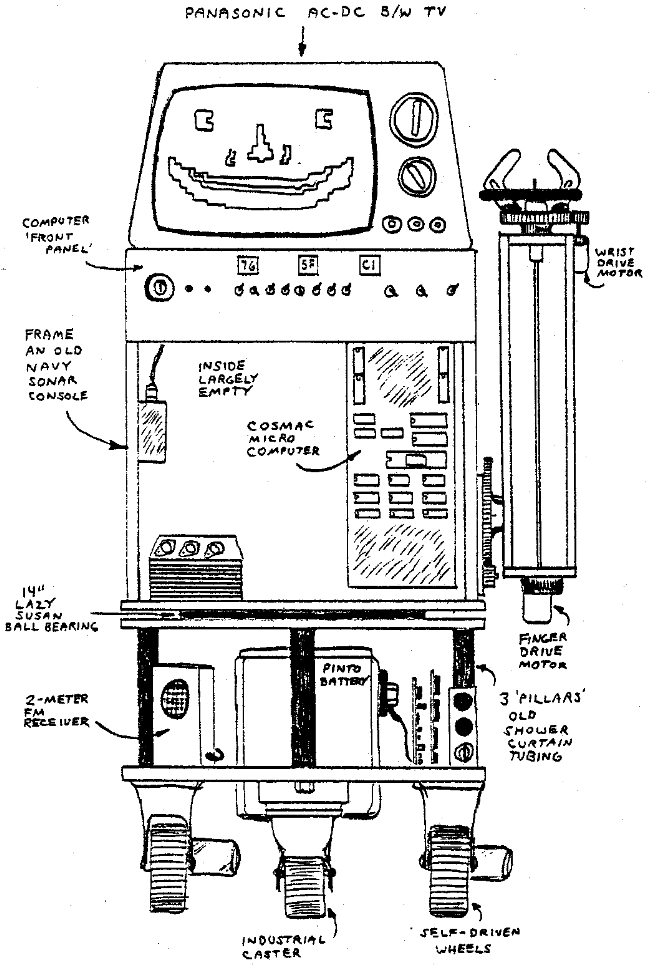
I think your name is cute too. I like you a lot, in fact. If it weren't for you, I wouldn't get to do anything but run around crushing beer cans and getting stared at by people. But because you believed in me I started to feel a little realer. Little girls like you have a way of doing that.

I do have a brain. I have two brains, in fact. One of them controls all my motors, and I have another one which does nothing else but control my eyes and mouth. It's a feature that would do my creator a lot of good. I have no choice but to use both my brains. I wonder about him sometimes.

Your picture was nice. I only have one arm, but you got the shape of my head just about right.

Stay happy, stay young, stay my friend.

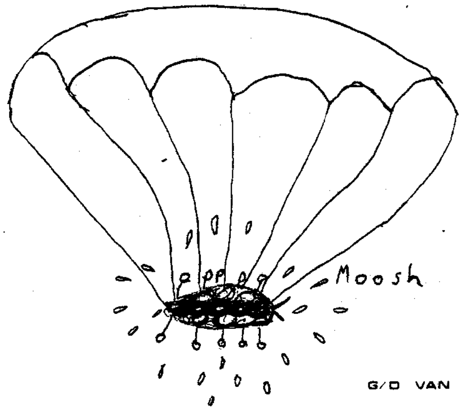
COSMO



COSMO KLEIN

(P.S. This is how I really look. --CK)

Mesklinite Paratrooper



G/D VAN DORN

QUARKS

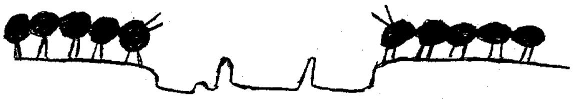
New computers are popping up everywhere you look. Bill Leininger just bought a Sol 20 with 16K. Jim Lisowski and Bill Colsher have popped for TRS-80's, and Bill has also ordered a PET. Bill, I should point out, is a full-time freelance microcomputer writer, and will be writing a book for Prentice Hall this winter for a great deal of money. Bill also has a Digital Group Z80 system, complete with snazzy official cabinet. Gordon Garb and Steve Johnson have virtually identical DG Z80 systems. Bill and his wife Michelle edit an excellent Digital Group newsletter, and he'll send you details if you write to him. Ed Hanley and somebody else (who? who? Let me know!) have Apple-II's. Gus Flassig and Alex Ellingsen have Imsai 8080's with bulging motherboards. Mike Bentley, I believe, has another Sol, and when I last spoke to Marco Mendez he was talking about buying one too. Bob Halloran has a Cromemco Z-2 with no peripherals. That's an expensive paperweight, Bob. Your editor has two wire-wrapped COSMAC systems, and has just received a COSMAC VIP from RCA. Kurt Sakeda has a KIM-1 in a beautiful plexiglas cabinet, including what must be the most pig power supply I have ever seen. Vaporize paper clips? Anybody for a horseshoe? Tullio has one of the very first Altair 8800's, and as far as I know he has never done anything with it. I'm sure many more of you have bought computers recently, and if you have, drop me a postcard and tell me about it.

Steve Johnson tells me that Elsie Twosie, the generation 2 Joe-type robot, will run for half an hour on a pair of used Polaroid film pack batteries. Sheesh! Makes you wonder what you could vaporize with a fresh one...

Bill Higgins has conned his way into a job at Fermilab, west of Chicago, and now lives near Bill and Michelle Colsher.

* * *

Grand Canyon of Mesklin

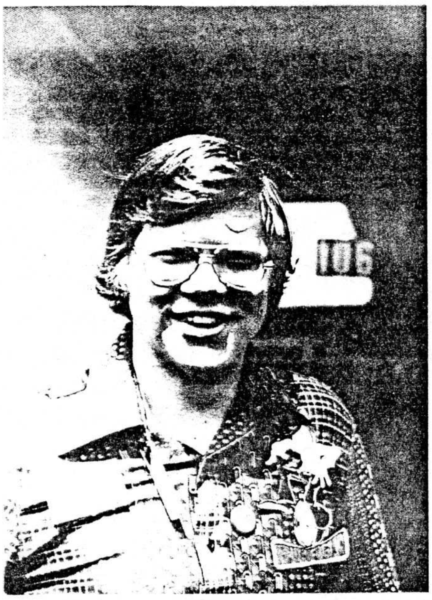


MUGHOT ROW

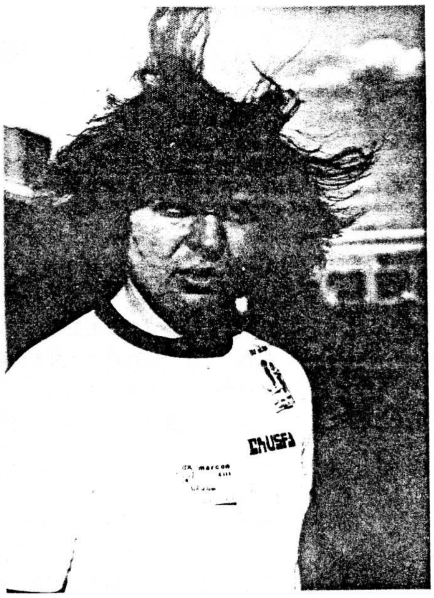
IS YOUR MUG HERE?

Yes, I know "mugshot" is misspelled. I married a good proofreader. But hell, I never was any good at touch-typing with rubon letters. I would have repaired the damage long before any of you saw it, but my fellow Pyro perpetrator decided it was cute and wouldn't allow it.

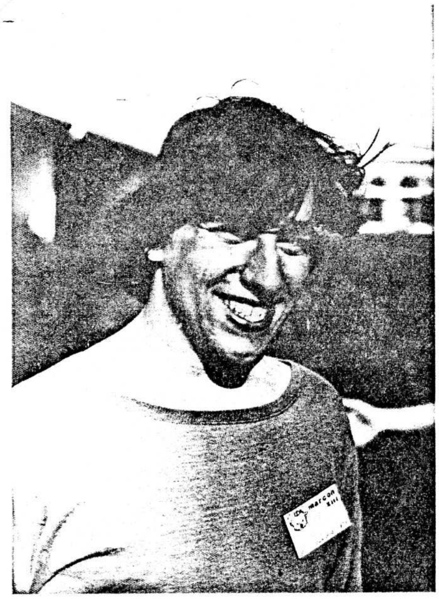
Now, take note of the fact that these are the kinds of pictures I take. If you'd rather not be shown with your eyes closed, face in shadow, and hair blowing straight up, well, send me something better. If you don't, you'll have to be content with what I take. Right, Phil?



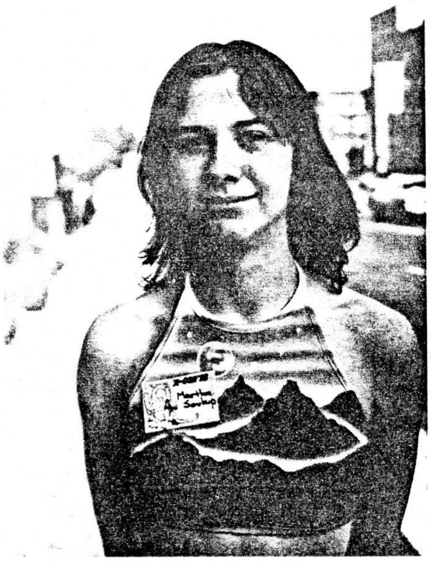
Phil Foglio



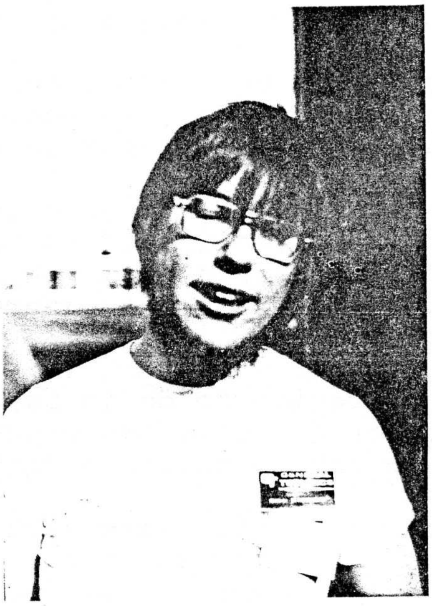
Rolf Wilson



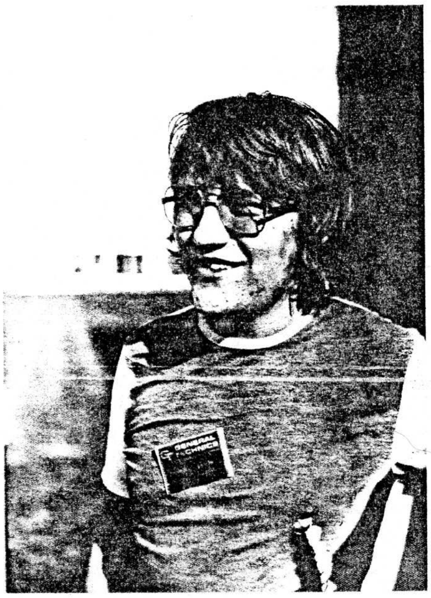
Dave Powell



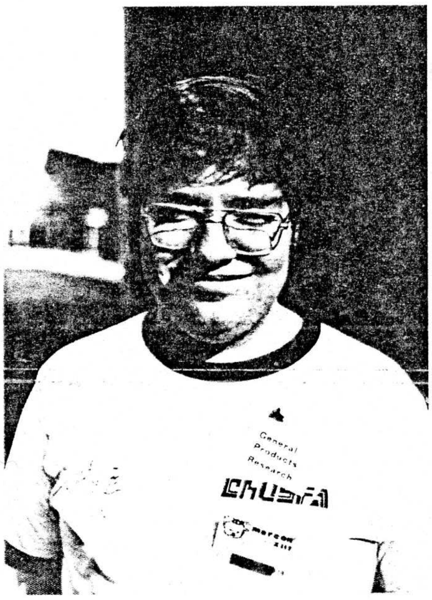
Martha Soukup



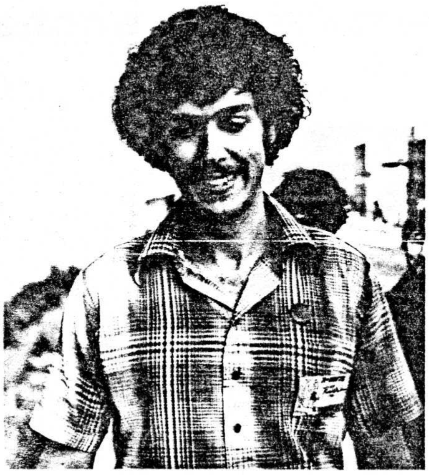
Bill Higgins



Barry Gehm



Bill Leininger



Jim Fuerstenberg

DO YOUR OWN PYRO!

No, I never mind other people doing my work for me! That's called "Effective Member Management." So, for those of you who want to do their very own issue of Pyro, a la Pseudo Technics, here's the engineering specs: Lay it out on 12 X 18" white paper. Leave 1" minimum margins at the top and bottom. For odd numbered pages leave 7/8" on the left and 1/2" on the right. For even numbered pages, do the opposite. Confused? I thought so. Loop again and read data until understood. Maximum number of pages mailable under one ounce is ten. (Five sheets of paper.) Leave the bottom third of the last page blank, except for our address in the upper left hand corner. Use 5" wide columns. They fit nicely.

Format is generally up to you. Don't feel obliged to grind out a carbon copy of what I do. I might suggest teaming up with a couple of other members on an issue; it's not as easy as it looks. Try to include a survey of techie-junk outlets in your area. Also, don't feel obliged to fill ten pages. Six or even four is plenty. Whatever you do, do in the spirit of GT.

That means, be techie, be outrageous, be funny, be accurate. I have only one absolutely sacred cow: the space program. Cuts against same will not appear in any GT publication. I'm just funny that way.

When it's all done, ship it to me somehow so that it has a reasonable chance of making it to me in one piece. A mailing tube is ideal. Just be careful how you roll it. Once I get it, I will run it off, fold it, staple it, address it, and mail it. That's all there is to it.

If you decide to do an issue, let me know. I can assign the issue a number (in case two groups are working simultaneously) and maybe send some Mesklinite cartoons.

Whatever you do, make sure you give yourself a byline. If you do the work, the egoboo is all yours, with my gracious compliments. You'll know why once you've finished the issue, but I won't dwell on that. Wouldn't want to scare you eager people off, would I..............

JEFF & CAROL DUNTEMANN
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GENERAL TECHNICS

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